deeply grateful to the President for the Address which he has been pleased to deliver to both Houses of Parliament assembled together on February 25, 2005."

The motion was adopted.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTER

Constitution of National Disaster Management Authority

THE MINISTER OF HOME (SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL): Sir, the country has witnessed some major disasters in the past few years; with the super cyclone in Orissa in the year 1999, the earthquake in Bhuj in 2001 and the recent Tsunami. In the light of these experiences, a need has been felt for an institutional mechanism which would facilitate drawing up and implemenation of plans and projects for mitigation of disasters; taking appropriate preparatory measures by various authorities/departments; and for coordinating response and relief after a disaster strikes.

The approach to disaster management has so far been reactive—responding to disasters after they occur. Not much attention has been paid to mitigation. it is possible to ensure this, provided appropriate mitigation measures are taken so that the next calamity does not result in the loss of property and lives as hitherto fore. It will be the endeavour of the Government to ensure that over a period of time this objective is achieved.

Whereas it has been widely accepted that the country's response to the recent Tsunami was prompt and effective, it is felt that the response to future disasters can be better if appropriate preparedness and capacity measures are put in place. A need has also been felt over time to vest the coordination mechanism with the necessary legislative back up to enable holistic coordination of resources for response.

In the light of the above requirements, it is proposed to enact a law on disaster management which will provide for the requisite institutional and coordination mechanism and powers for undertaking the mitigation measures as also mechanism for ensuring preparedness and capacity building to handle disasters. The Disaster Management Bill, 2005 is proposed to be introduced in the current Budget Session of the Parliament.

In the light of the above requirements and keeping in view that the passage of the Bill is likely to take some time, it is proposed to provide for the requisite institutional and coordination mechanism and powers for undertaking mitigation measures as also mechanism for ensuring preparedness and capacity building to handle disasters during the interim period. It is, therefore, proposed to set up a National Disaster Management Authority as associated Committees by executive orders immediately, in accordance with the provisions of the proposed Bill, pending enactment of the law. These institutional and coordination mechanisms will be modified in the line with statutory provisions after the passage of the Bill.

In the meantime, action has already been taken to earmark 8 battalions of Central Para Military Forces, from their existing strength, to be trained and equipped to function as specialist response teams. Training of trainers for responding to natural disasters has been completed. Similar training for responding to radiological, biological and chemical emergencies has also been undertaken. 18 specialist response teams have already been trained for responding to natural disaster.

Communication is of the utmost importance in coordinating response to a disaster. An Emergency Communication Plan has been approved and is under implementation for providing communication linkages among national, State and District level Emergency Operation Centres and the Mobile Communication Units to be set up at the sites of disasters.

The National Institute of Disaster Management was set up through issue of an executive order is October, 2003. After the passage of the Bill, necessary notification for setting up of the National Institute of Disaster Management will be issued with appropriate modifications, if any, to ensure that it conforms with the law.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Next statement. ...(*Interruptions*)... I think we can take both the statements.

Relief and Rehabilitation of Tsunami Affected People

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL): Sir, the second statement is a very long statement. I seek your permission to lay it on the Table of the House. This is a statement which relates to the steps which have been taken by the Government at the national, State and district level. Now, this is a statement which was asked for by the